

Any cemetery assisted by a VA grant must be maintained and operated according to the operational standards and measures of the National Cemetery Administration. After construction, the administration, operation and maintenance of a State's veterans cemetery is solely the responsibility of the State government, and the National Cemetery Administration has no further financial obligation to the State for the burial of veterans, with one important exception, which is the nub of this speech.

Currently, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is authorized to pay a plot or interment allowance up to \$300 per burial to a State for expenses incurred by the State for the burial of eligible veterans in a cemetery owned and operated by the State if the burial is performed at no cost to the veteran's next of kin. This benefit is administered by the Veterans Benefit Administration, and the State must apply to VBA to receive it. A great program, a great supplement to the assistance by our States of the national obligations to our veterans.

But despite the \$300 currently provided to State governments for each veteran buried in a State veterans cemetery, the true cost is as much as \$750 per burial and rising. Thus, even with the partial reimbursements provided by the VA, State governments with no available Federal cemeteries pay millions of dollars to fulfill our Federal commitment to provide a final resting place for our veterans.

This shortfall is particularly painful during the current budget difficulties faced by many States across our Nation and has the inevitable result, as it has in Hawaii, of inexcusable shortfalls in available State veterans cemeteries, both in burial plot availability and especially in operation and maintenance of existing facilities. This is certainly again the case in Hawaii which operates several State veterans cemeteries through VBA assistance that are stretched way beyond their means. I could go down the list, but the one that comes to mind most quickly is the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery on my home island of Hawaii.

The bill I introduce today proposes a simple modification in an otherwise solid Federal program, to raise the Federal reimbursement for veteran burials in State cemeteries where there is no Federal VA option from \$300 to \$750 per burial. The price, a minimal \$5 million annually as priced last year by the CBO. This is fair and necessary and will enable us to fulfill this most basic obligation. I ask for my colleagues' support.

Mahalo.

INTRODUCTION OF CONCURRENT RESOLUTION HONORING THE SECOND CENTURY OF BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under a previous order of

the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) and I introduced H. Con. Res. 41 to honor Big Brothers Big Sisters, the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States which celebrated its 100th anniversary last year. In recognition of this milestone, we encourage our colleagues to cosponsor the resolution which celebrates the centennial of Big Brothers Big Sisters and encourages the organization as it works toward its goal of serving one million children annually. A Senate companion to this legislation is being introduced by Senators ENSIGN and DODD.

The gentleman from Nebraska and I both know firsthand the importance of mentoring, and we have both experienced its many rewards. I have been a Big Brother now for over 18 years. Beginning in 1986 when I was a relatively young lawyer, I walked into the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles and volunteered to become a Big Brother. I was given three Little Brother applications, each of whom had been on a waiting list for years. I was also asked how I would feel about having a minority Little Brother, to which I responded I thought it would be an even better experience for me and I hoped for my Little Brother as well.

I was paired ultimately with David, then 7 years old, who had been on the waiting list for 2 years; and we were Big Brothers for a day. It was a test run. We went to the beach. We survived the beach, and we decided we were the survivors, and now 18 years later we are still the survivors in a brotherhood that has lasted for almost two decades. Over that time, we went to the movies, we went to the park, we threw a ball around, we did all the kind of things brothers do. We each became part of each other's family. I cannot say what kind of a difference I may have made in his life, but I can tell you he has made a wonderful difference in mine.

I had the opportunity some years ago to go to David's graduation from Yale University. I like to say, when people ask me whether I think that without my influence in his life David would have gone to Yale, I say, no, he would have gone to Harvard. There is more than a little truth in that. He is an extraordinary not-so-young man now.

I also had a wonderful opportunity to watch him graduate from USC film school, and I am looking forward one day to going to the premiere of one of his films.

It has been a fabulous experience for me, and I know it has been a fabulous experience for my colleague from Nebraska, who has long been a champion of mentoring, having established a successful program at the University of Nebraska. We join with many Americans in recognizing the significant contributions to our Nation's children that Big Brothers Big Sisters have

been making since 1904 through mentoring, creating and nurturing one-to-one relationships between adults and children.

Through the 454 local agencies that make up this life-changing organization, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than 220,000 children ages 5 through 18 in 5,000 communities across the United States.

Research shows that Big Brothers Big Sisters one-to-one mentoring helps at-risk youth overcome the myriad of challenges they face. Little Brothers and Little Sisters are less likely to begin using illegal drugs or consuming alcohol, skip school and classes or engage in acts of violence. They have greater self-esteem, more confidence in their performance at school and are able to get along better with their friends and families.

The organization works closely with parents and guardians to match every child with appropriate Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Each potential volunteer is screened, trained and supervised to ensure that the mentor-child relationship will be a safe and rewarding experience for everyone involved. I can attest to that. My interview, I think, was several hours long.

Partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters benefits America's most important national treasure, our children. Major private investments have enabled the organization to be a pioneer in volunteerism and developing new ways to reach different populations of at-risk kids. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Big Brothers Big Sisters is an ideal Federal partner as Congress strives to provide a better future for America's children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SANDERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Texas will be recognized to speak in place of the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS).

There was no objection.

EDUCATING THE WORLD'S CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of months, or at least almost 2 months, we have been listening to the very sad stories that have come out of the tsunami region. Those of us who have had